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# Message Text

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60
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 VO-03 DHA-02 ORM-02 L-03 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02

/038 W
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R 231608Z DEC 75
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6298

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E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CI, SHUM, PINT
SUBJECT: CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS: RELEASE OF PRISONERS

REF: SANTIAGO 8582

1. SUMMARY: FOUR PRIESTS RELEASED DECEMBER 19, AND FATHER GAJARDO DECEMBER 22. GOC AND CHURCH PUBLIC STATEMENTS INDICATE LOW-KEY ENDING TO MIR-CHURCH PERSONS EPISODE BUT A FEW LOOSE ENDS REMAIN. END SUMMARY.

2. FATHERS PATRICIO CARIOLA, RAFAEL MAROTO, FERNANDO SALAS AND GERARDO WHELAN WERE RELEASED LATE AFTERNOON DECEMBER 19. IN OFFICIAL STATEMENT, GOC SAID THE FOUR AND FATHER FERMIN DONOSO (PREVIOUSLY RELEASED ON BAIL) HAD BEEN DETAINED AND INDICTED AS RESULT OF THEIR ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS WANTED FOR NATIONAL SECURITY REASONS (ASSISTING MIR FUGITIVES), BUT GOC WAS RELEASING ALL FIVE IN INTEREST OF PEACE AND NATIONAL UNITY. STATEMENT SAID PRIESTS GAVE TACIT RECOGNITION TO THEIR PARTICIPATION IN ILLEGAL ACT BY NOT APPEALING INDICTMENT, BUT THAT PRESIDENT PINOCHET UNDER-STOOD THEIR ACTIONS MIGHT HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY ALTRUISTIC MOTIVES AND CONCEPT OF MERCY. STATEMENT NEVERTHELESS WARNED AGAINST SUCH ACTIVITIES INFUTURE.

3. CARDINAL RESONNDED WITH OFFICIAL ARCHBISHOPRIC STATEMENT WHICH
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SAID RELEASE OF THE FIVE PRIESTS WAS RECEIVED WITH PLEASURE

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AND GRATITUDE. STATEMENT REITERATED CHURCH BELIEF THAT PRIESTS' ACTIONS WERE NOT CRIMINAL, BUT RESULT OF THEIR FOLLOWING RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS. CHURCH HOPED THAT PRESS WOULD NOTE GOC DECISION AND STOP CAMPAIGN BY SOME MEDIA (READ "LA SEGUNDA") TO DISCREDIT CHURCH.

4. NEITHER STATEMENT MENTIONED FATHER PATRICIO GAJARDO. CHURCH SOURCE INDICATED TO EMBOFF DECEMBER 22 THAT PRESSURE WAS BEING PUT ON GOC FOR RELEASE, AND WE LEARNED NEXT DAY THAT HE HAD IN FACT BEEN RELEASED AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER 22.

5. CHRISTMAS MESSAGE OF BISHOPS ISSUED AFTER EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE (SANTIAGO 8503) CALLED ON GOC TO GRANT GENERAL AMNESTY TO THOSE DETAINED WITHOUT CHARGE DESPITE LACK OF DEFINITE DEROGATORY INFORMATION AGAINS THEM. MESSAGE AND PINOCHET'S AMNESTY STATEMENT CROSSED. IN MEETING WITH PRESS FOLLOWING BISHOPS' CONFERENCE, NEW PRESIDENT OF EPISCOPAL PERMANENT COMMITTEE ARCHBISHOP FRESNO STRESSED THAT THERE WAS NO CONNECTION BETWEEN AMNESTY REQUEST AND GOC DECISION TO RELEAST PERSONS.

6. AT SAME PRESS CONFERENCE, BISHIP CAMUS REAFFIRMED THAT COMMITTEE FOR PEACE WOULD BE DISSOLVED AS OF DECEMBER 31 BUT STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF WORK CONTINUING.

7. COMMENT: BOTH PUBLIC STATEMENTS INDICATE A RATHER GRACERUL, LOW-KEY ENDING TO THE MIR FUGITIVE-CHURCH PERSONS EPISODE, BUT A FEW LOOSE ENDS REMAIN. STATUS OF OTHERE DETAINED PEACE COMMITTEE ASSOCIATES (SANTIAGO-8505) IS UNCLEAR AND POSSIBLE CONTINUING IRRITANT IN CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS.

8. CARDINAL SILVA MET WITH PINOCHET FOR OVER AN HOUR DECEMBER

22. EMBOFF HAS APPOINTMENT DECEMBER 24 FOR DEBRIEFING FROM SENIOR CHURCHMAN.
POPPER

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